

Assessing Social Values Relative to Offshore Wind Energy Areas in North and South Carolina

Frequently Asked Questions

Description: Researchers with NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) are conducting this study to better understand how social factors, place-based values, and geographic location influence community support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development. To achieve this research goal, NCCOS will conduct a household survey of residents to collect information about their attitudes, beliefs, and values related to marine and coastal landscapes and offshore wind energy development. Additionally, information will be collected about residents' level of support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development. The study will document the importance of coastal areas to residents. It will also assess community perception of how offshore wind energy development may benefit or detract from the region. The study focuses on a portion of the Carolina coast, spanning the coastal region of southern North Carolina and northern South Carolina, where the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is at varying stages of proposing offshore areas for wind energy development.

Who is conducting this study?

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts science on the nation's oceans, coasts, and atmosphere, and provides citizens and decision-makers with information on how to manage their natural resources. NCCOS is conducting this study, which is a part of NOAA's National Ocean Service. The mission of NCCOS is to conduct science to inform coastal management.

Why is NOAA conducting this study?

NCCOS has significant experience conducting research to inform coastal and marine spatial planning efforts throughout the U.S. and its territories, including the development of quantitative assessments to evaluate people's perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, and social values from a spatial perspective. This study will inform planning for usage of the marine environment to achieve important national goals.

Who is funding this study and why?

The BOEM Office of Renewable Energy Programs (OREP) oversees development of offshore renewable energy projects on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) (<http://www.boem.gov/Renewable-Energy/>). BOEM's responsibilities include determining and evaluating the effects of OCS activities on natural, historical, and human resources, and the appropriate monitoring and mitigation of those effects. Efforts in the Carolinas to develop offshore wind energy require an assessment of potential environmental, human, and social impacts. BOEM is partnering with other federal agencies, including NOAA, and working closely with the North Carolina Renewable Energy Intergovernmental Task Force to acquire the information needed to meet this mandate. This study is sponsored by BOEM's Environmental

Studies Program (ESP). The ESP was established by the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, as amended in 1978 (OCSLA) to provide information for sound decision-making and management.

Why is this study being conducted in North Carolina and South Carolina?

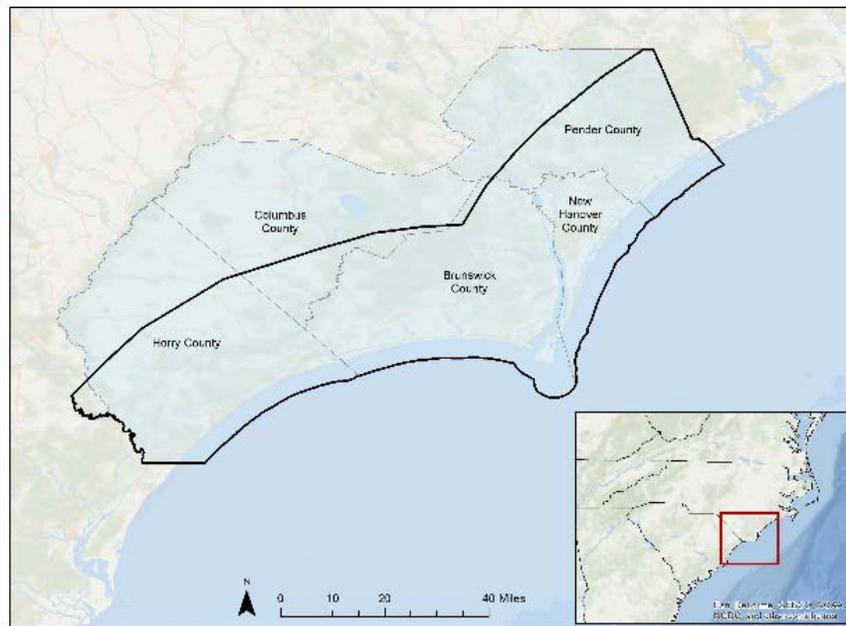
This study location was chosen because BOEM has identified three Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) off the coast of North Carolina for potential wind energy development: Kitty Hawk, Wilmington West and Wilmington East. Similarly, several locations are in the early stages of consideration off the coast of South Carolina: Green Strand, Cape Romain, Winyah and Charleston.

How will you collect the data?

The data will be collected using a survey mailed to a randomly selected sample of households within the study area.

Who will be asked to take the survey?

The study region (depicted in the map below) consists of the region within 20 miles of the coast across Brunswick, Columbus, Pender, and New Hanover Counties in North Carolina, and Horry County in South Carolina. Residents who live the study region will be randomly invited to participate in the study.



Is participation in the survey mandatory?

No, participation in the survey is voluntary.

What types of questions will you ask?

The survey will consist of questions designed to assess residents' perceptions, beliefs, values, and behaviors regarding the importance of the Carolina coast and wind energy development. Questions on their level of support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development and its

potential influences will also be gathered. Finally, information will be collected on the demographic characteristics of participants.

Are responses confidential?

Yes, responses to the survey will remain confidential. For analysis and reporting purposes, all answers provided will be aggregated with the responses of others who participate in the study.

Can I take the survey?

Due to our random sampling design, only those who are selected through the sampling process will be invited to take the survey. If you receive a survey in the mail, we encourage you to complete it and return it to us.

How long will the survey take?

We estimate that the survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

When will data collection take place?

The survey will take place over a three to four month period in early 2018.

What is the timeline for this project?

The project will last three to four fiscal years. The project began in October 2015.

How much does this project cost?

This project was funded by BOEM. If you would like more information on BOEM's budget and priorities, please see: <http://www.boem.gov/BOEM-FY-2016-Budget-Justification>.

What product will be derived from this effort?

Findings from this study will be compiled into a final report that will be provided to BOEM. The report will include data tables, maps, and other information.

How will BOEM use the information collected in this study?

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPA) authorized BOEM to issue leases, easements, and rights of way to allow for renewable energy development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). EPA provided a general framework for BOEM to follow when authorizing these renewable energy activities. For example, EPA requires that BOEM ensure that renewable energy development takes place in a responsible manner. BOEM's decision-making process is subject to thorough environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act. When performing environmental reviews, BOEM uses publicly-available information, including the results of BOEM studies such as this one.

How will findings from this study help my community?

The data collected through this research will help BOEM to assess the potential human and social impacts from offshore wind energy development in your region.

Who can I contact with questions about this study?

You may contact the project principal investigator:

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Who can I contact to provide comments on offshore wind energy development?

You may contact representatives at BOEM's energy intergovernmental task force to share public comments. For information about the NC Task Force, contact Will Waskes at will.waskes@boem.gov, or call 703-787-1300. For public feedback, contact the NC Energy Group in the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality at alexander.zarnowski@ncdenr.gov, or by calling 877-623-6748.